

In The Hollywood Deli

a married man and his obvious wife sit by the window and eat and wipe their tarbaby's chin.

Hubby is bored to half-death.

Outside, a young queen drifts by: effete, tousled, leary, slim as a child bride.

Inside, the diner is seized with a spasm of desire so powerful that he identifies it as pain

and he gapes at his sandwich, thinking himself the victim of a Jewish conspiracy.

The Burglar

He was too good, that's why he never got anywhere. At his first job as a fry cook, he either baked everything into oblivion or spent so much time arranging it attractively that it got cold and hard. When an angry patron sailed a fried egg at him and it stuck in the wall, he quit.

A month later he found work in a veterinary's office. His first assignment was to wash a Great Dane. When he finished the dog was half-dead and mad with pain.

Frustrated, he decided to turn to crime and get revenge on a world he never made. Things haven't improved:

Every night he goes out, the aluminum ladder clanking against the saw, his metal safety hat forever dropping off as he bends to retrieve the jars and cans, bottles and tins that tumble from his pockets.

Behind him, the houses light up in sleepy succession: "What the hell was that?" ask the owners. "Christ, I never heard such a racket."

While outside he walks, a hundred dogs yapping at his heels, metal-soled climbing shoes grating on the pavement, eyes fixed on the dark quiet houses at the end of the block.